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Senate

The Senate met at 12:01 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Precious Lord, You delight in those who have integrity. Lord, Your Word describes integrity as always trying to maintain a clear conscience before You and everyone else. Inspire our law-makers to obey the voice of conscience, focusing on pleasing You by being true to duty. Lord, provide them with the determination to do what is right and leave the consequences to You. May they receive the smile of Heaven's approval because of their striving to be faithful. Help them to ignore the shouts from the shadows and focus on glorifying You.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 24, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN W.

HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jennifer Mulhern Granholm, of Michigan, to be Secretary of Energy.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

SCHOOLS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I am going to talk for just a few minutes about the need to open our schools. I think you would agree with me because I followed your career—with admiration, by the way—that our country is only as good as its dreams and we are only as valuable as our children. And, in my judgment, we are doing immeasurable damage in this country to our children.

We all know that we had to close down our public schools and our parochial schools and our private schools,

pre-K to 12, because of the coronavirus, but I think most fairminded Americans understand that we need to open them.

The future of this country is education. It is not the level of the stock market. It is not the unemployment rate. It is not who the President is. It is education, and we know that. So why aren't we opening our public schools when we know it is safe to do so?

I am very proud of our efforts in Louisiana. Seventy percent of our public school students are back learning in person—70 percent. And I want to thank every teacher, every parent, every school board member, every maintenance worker in our schools, and anyone who directly or indirectly influenced this result. They are heroes in my opinion. Seventy percent—I am so proud of that.

I especially want to thank our teachers. I have been a volunteer public school teacher in Louisiana for—I don't know—20-plus years. I do it three times a year, and I am a real substitute—none of this go for an hour and talk about how a bill becomes a law. I am a real substitute: quarter to 7 to 3, teach five classes, do your bus duty, your lunchroom duty, and get worn out. So I have some appreciation for what it takes to teach, particularly in this difficult environment, and I especially want to thank our teachers.

But that 70 percent figure that I am talking about, the number of our public school children in Louisiana who are back to in-person learning, is only 40 percent nationwide, and that is an embarrassment. That is a disgrace. We are doing immeasurable damage—immeasurable damage—to a generation of children.

Now, I don't need to tell you we have been struggling with elementary and secondary education for the last 40 or 50 years, and it is very frustrating because Americans can do extraordinary things. We can unravel the human genome. Americans can take a diseased human heart and replace it with a new

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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